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OFFICIAL LP4 LISTENING GUIDE

Photo by Sonny DiPerri

01 Man Overboard

MIKE KINSELLA Lamos had this beat for a while and eventually Nate put some sinuous / sinister melodies on it. Right off the bat it sounded like the song was drunk, so lyrically I decided to write to that sense of unease / seasickness / being lost. There's a certain amount of confidence / acceptance to the situation though; as opposed to it being, like a devastating situation, the narrator seems resigned to just exist that way.

STEVE LAMOS I've had this disorienting / drunk beat and basic chord progression kicking around since probably 2020: its working title was "Cautious Nausea," which I think is still apt. (It's mostly a progression in 5 and 6 with a few twists.) Ultimately, though, the gang took it and made it better–lyrically, melodically, and in terms of overall vibe. I'm also gonna say that the end combination of the James Bond theme part, Mike's lyrics, and Nate's bass marks one of my favorite musical moments in the history of this band.

STEVE HOLMES Lamos master class on this one. I also love Nate's introductory hum vocal lead-in. Probably the most prog rock song we've ever done. Definitely feels like new territory for the band, and exciting opener for what's to come on the album.

SONNY DIPERRI In the end, we had the drums down but a lot of the riffs were in fluid stages and if I remember correctly, Nate had come back from the beach and was inspired to play. He asked me to put the ending of the song on loop and just played over and over until his lead bass riff fell out of his wrists right in front of us. That bass part shaped everything that came next: the heavy guitars, the explosive drums. even during the mix, I remember Mike asking if there was a way to set the ending of the song up because the bass goes so hard at the end of that song.

02 No Feeling

MK Sort of a cliche AF (or, rather, Mike Kinsella) guitar part. Subtly-off time signature, predictably melodic. I had the chorus written for a while and ended up finding the Nyx reference / inspo after we found a way to make a “dark” version of the verse. Total dumb luck that we were in LA and Brendan was hanging and willing to sing the gang vocal part.

SL Mike recently called this “goth”: he’s so right. It’s as if some of what we were doing on LP3 went even darker–even if Brendan’s vocals still make it sound triumphant. One of my favorites, without a doubt.

SH Twin Peaks vibes on this one with that baritone guitar line. I love the deliberate pace of this song and all the melodic layers happening. A song you can get lost in for sure. One of the few tracks that has made me tear up at an instrumental vs. lyrical moment, but there is something about the intensity of the bendy/build part against the gentleness of the rest of the song that is spine tingling to me. And the video is also amazing.

SD Two big memories from this song were having Brendan from Turnstile come sing the backing vocals at my studio. The band played some shows at the El Rey theatre and wanted to stay in town and work more on the album. They mentioned people doing features but I wasn't sure who was coming or when. I wanted to make sure that he was comfortable. He was so comfortable that he did them on the couch, but by the end of the session sang while standing and had ideas for harmonies that really took the song to the next level. I remember looking over at Nate once Brendan started standing and singing and we were both blown away.

The other memory from that song was re-processing a lot of the sounds to re-image some parts that we recorded out in stinson. We took a bunch of Holmes's guitars that he recorded for things and amplified them through a Leslie speaker that's typically used for organs. it turned the guitar into a swirling, spinning sound that we loved.

"I think this is the best record we've ever made. This is the album we've been building to over the last decade and it's exciting and gratifying to still discover new things and be making the best music of our lives and still recognize there is more we can explore and continue to grow as a band and as individuals."

- Steve Holmes

03 Blood On My Blood

MK My favorite song on the album (currently.) Somehow we made an intellectual pop song out of a dark, ominous drone. No wasted notes - each new element or part or turn introduced pays off. And I loooove the way Caithlin [DeMarrais] sings the word "Desperate." Possibly subconsciously inspired by my girlfriend's obsession with murder podcasts? I thought it'd be fun to make being the recipient of the narrator's love almost threatening / scary. Definitely the most times I've sung the word "blood" in one song before.

SL This one hearkens back, for me at least, to "Mine to Miss" from LP3–but in a more straightforward, groove-oriented way. This is one of my favorite beats to play–and the "oohs" and "aahs" seemed like a fun addition that somehow hearken back to a whole bunch of 60s-era pop.

SH The drone gives the song a subtle sinister vibe which matches the murder mystery vibe of the lyric. I love the pizzicato strings part and weird ghost guitar that Nate played.

What have you learned about yourself since you started making music?

NATE KINSELLA The music that I've had a hand in creating has always been a sort of mirror. I feel like I can see myself more clearly by looking at the things I've made. And it illuminates the dynamics of the relationships that I have with my collaborators. There are so many new discoveries with each album/project. It's a great way to grow.

04 Bad Moons

MK This was a cool loop / sample that Nate made. Reminded me of like 90's hip hop. Obviously I had to go make it all sensitive and shit. I had the "Dr. Jekyll" line first and then wrote about what it feels like to feel like two (or more?) different people living one life. The outro lyrics are the most blunt / honest / embarrassing / cathartic I've ever written.

SL I remember loving the lo-fi hip-hop vibe of the beginning, but had nothing solid for the end part when I hit the studio. Sonny had me let loose, probably across 8 or 10 passes, to capture what became the drums for the outro. I'm glad that he did!

SH The build to the cathartic outro is maybe my favorite moment on the record. Will be another amazing one to play live.

SD The song that blew me away that also had studio magic in it was "Bad Moons." It was one of the last songs we tracked drums for. The song was originally titled "harp loop" and we loaded the Pro Tools session up for him to play over. Lamos had all of his parts worked out for the song up until the big "string guitar" part. The song started and he played all the bits he had. Then when the tracks ended, I didn't stop him and he launched into what was one of the most mind blowing performances I have ever seen in the studio. He played this long, ever evolving paradiddle based groove that crescendos and changed up until he ran out of ideas. I remember pacing in the control room (which is in the basement) trying to figure out how he played that part, how the band is going to react, and how someone can make it sound so easy. The magic for that song came together in Chicago at Shirk Studios.

Shirk was there for vocals, keyboards, pianos, experiments, etc. During our Shirk session, we got a lot of vocals as well. I built a hut out of packing blankets so Mike couldn't see us, turned all the lights off, and let the studio's skylight light up the live room. I sat with Nate and we tracked vocals and guitars for a few days until one night I heard Nate play piano. Someone mentioned Nate playing on "harp loop" and we wanted to figure out a way to get a different sort of performance and sound out of the piano. I called the studio's owner and asked if he had any tape laying around because we were working digitally. I figured out that the tape machine had the ability to be sped up and slowed up (aka varisped) and recorded Nate improvising and at a very slow tempo. Then, I sped up the tape machine to match the proper key of the song and then they let me perform the starts and stops and rewinds live as the tape loops played over the recorded version of "Bad Moons." The very first thing you hear on the song is Nate recording me starting the tape machine. All of Nate's piano parts were completely improvised from another key and we let the tape roll over the song.

That piano coupled with Mike's bridge vocal is something I'll never forget. When his voice cracked during the take, it showed how exposed and sincere the lyrics are on the album.

Hearing the first play back of that was incredible. I remember Mike leaning back on the couch and laughing at how awesome it was! Studio magic!

Photo by Andy DeSantis

05 The One with the Piano

LAMOS I've had this melody kicking around on the horn on-and-off for maybe 20 years. But as soon as Nate sat behind the piano, it came alive in a new way. This felt like a magical moment–and it's not one that I'll soon forget.

06 Patron Saint of Pale

MK Somehow the "Let's play rochambeau" line arrived in my head and as hard as I tried, I couldn't get rid of it. Ultimately it stayed, and I had to write the rest of the song to it (these ended up being the last of the lyrics written for the album…) I justified keeping it because the chorus sounds so playful - ended up making rochambeau the only viable solution to a messy divorce. I like diffusing what would be a serious / heavy topic (divorce) with such a silly, almost absurd take on said heavy situation. What was imagined as a whole children's choir singing along ended up being only Nate's niece, and neighborhood friend and I think its way cooler to have it be looser and sillier…

SL This beat reminds me of jumping on a trampoline: something about the sparse guitar and simple bass make we want to play as behind the beat as I possibly can. (The timing here reminds us all of "Give Me the Gun" from LP2, but it features less trickery.) Also, I almost fell out of my chair the first time I heard the piano line at the beginning along with the "forlorn and frail" lyric and melody: it's like they took the main melody from "The One with the Piano" and refracted it through broken glass. This is another of my favorite moments in the history of this band.

SH Maybe our most playful song ever, but still has some weirdness in there as well. Love the kids vocals on the chorus. This one is also super fun to play live. The outro is kind of insane to play as I'm in 9 against the band's 7 and it's a total mind fuck.

07 Wake Her Up

MK My best Morrissey impersonation to date! This song was maybe the hardest to arrange because there are a handful of parts that all sound cool and transition into and out of each other nicely, but it all happens linearly (as opposed to verse / chorus, etc) The female melody / line “Wake her up” existed for a while but didn’t have anyone in mind to sing it and then we heard like 1 minute of a Wisp song and were like “She’s gotta sing that line!” Came out exactly as I heard it in my head and we liked it so much we ended up using it on top of the outro as well. The whole song is presented as if it’s about the “girl in the river Seine” but it’s actually about the boy who fell in love with her (and maybe they all are.) Another common theme - selfish narrator.

SH Love this one! Somehow the closest thing we’ve ever written to a song that could/would get played on the radio… yet it has no chorus and a 2-minute instrumental horn outro. Weirdly, the half-time tambourine is my favorite part of the song. First ever guitar solo to appear in an American Football song?

SD The funny thing about that song is the distorted drum intro in the beginning of that song. I had ordered some gobos for my studio so I could track drums for another album and they were delivered late in the afternoon - right before Nate and Mike had to fly home. They helped me carry them into the studio and Nate sat down to play my drum kit and said "this sounds pretty good!" I joked that "I have one mic plugged up and ready if you want to lay down a beat!" and he did, a handful of tries and he had it. He then ran up my driveway to head to the airport.

Another good one was Mike playing the guitar solo with two pairs of sunglasses on while we were turning the lights on and off in the studio, ha!

08 Desdemona

MK My other current favorite song. There were about 7 different iterations of the chorus and I couldn’t settle on one, and then stumbled upon the character Desdemona and it fit perfect in the verse, so I reverse-engineered it from the verses into the choruses. So cool when something appears and it’s obviously “it” - like, “Ok THIS is what the song is.” Until that point I feel like I’m just floating around the songs like a kite. Seems like a common theme throughout the album of trying to make the songs both dark and beautiful / poignant and irreverent all at the same time.

SL This feels like a companion to “No Feeling” for me–and I hope that we can integrate it into the live set ASAP somehow. The Steve Reich part kills me.

SH Love the sorta Fripp-inspired e-bow parts on this song. I love the bridge/build. Such a great part, but it only happens once which is kind of nuts but also amazing when it comes around.

09 Lullabye

MK The best song AF in 1998 wrote (written by Nate, who wasn’t in the band until 2014)

SH A nice little horn interlude to catch your breath before the finale...

10 No Soul to Save

MK Had a tough time getting from A (where the song begins) to B (the outro) on this one but ultimately I think we cracked it, having the callback to the gospel choir bridge the two. Ever since we recorded the first demo of this song in a room together it was sort of obviously a "Last song." So I wrote towards that, as if it were a farewell - as a performer, boyfriend, human, etc. A boy can dream.

SL This one is brutal–and yet another favorite of mine. This beat, has always felt like a staggering tightrope walk for me–a walk that feels like it's gonna end with a fall. (I think it's in 15, and it reminds me of "Born to Lose" from LP2 for that reason.) But then Mike goes and writes lyrics from the perspective of a magician / circus performer who's clearly doomed: I feel like the narrator starts to fall around 2:40–and then to proceed into the afterlife starting around 4:05. (Truly, the whole outro feels like an angel in flight–like joy after all of that anguish…) I keep a list of best closing tracks on records in my head–and this one would make the cut for me even if I weren't in this band.

SH Another one we wrote to a Lamos beat. We re-arranged a riff I had to match the pulse of the song. The choir was a stroke of genius on this one I think and a perfect setting against the lyric and completes the journey of the album.

SD I thought this was a good song when we finished it but I didn't feel the gravity of the song until I heard the album in order while I was doing the quality control for the test presses for the vinyl. We got to cut the lacquers with Bernie Grundman and as the cut was happening, got to listen to the album in this perfectly quiet room with only the highest audiophile / studio quality gear. The second that choir came in, I was floored.

"Cory Bracken (our live vibraphone and synth player) had some musical input on this one. He got super into synthesizers over the past few years and sent us a folder of around 50 drone pieces he made. They're sprinkled all over the album. Mike Garzon (our guitar tech and live guitarist/vocalist) added some vocals too. After having played so many shows with them up there with us, it felt really nice to bring them into the recordings."

- Nate Kinsella

SONNY DIPERRI The Panoramic House was chosen from a list of studios that I had pitched to the band after having a few chats with them on Zoom. They were interested and excited to switch things up / get away to execute the ideas that they had been working out during their pre-production meetings and rehearsals; sending ideas back and forth to work on and tighten up. I pitched a few bigger, more posh-and-proper studios to them that I loved working at, and put the "Pano" on the list as well. I've probably done 15-16 albums there at this point and have a ten year history with the studio's owner. We're close friends and it's truly a space that you have to see to believe. The band said that they wanted to put me somewhere I was comfortable to stretch out and I think they made the right choice!

The studio overlooks Bolinas Bay, has a kitchen attached to the live room that looks at the sea, and has an absolutely incredible sounding live room that gives you something back. There is a personality to the house that is the studio - it's all one big, connected space. It was built by literally one family and their friends + children in the late 60s from reclaimed material. I think that made it easy for us to all be together in close quarters while also giving everyone space if they needed it. People went to the beach, people hiked or hit the grocery when they weren't working with me. That house is my happy place. To bring such bright people there was an unforgettable experience. I had two full days with Lamos to cut drums and get to know each other. As a drummer myself, recording amazing drummers is something that I take great care in as I never had that in my bands when recording. to watch and listen to steve open up and spread his wings in that room was a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Panoramic House Exterior. Photo by Sonny DiPerri.

The environment of that space allows people to try things and make mistakes with no consequences. Every member of the band tried things during the sessions with such a carefree attitude that allowed the performances to be as bold as they are.

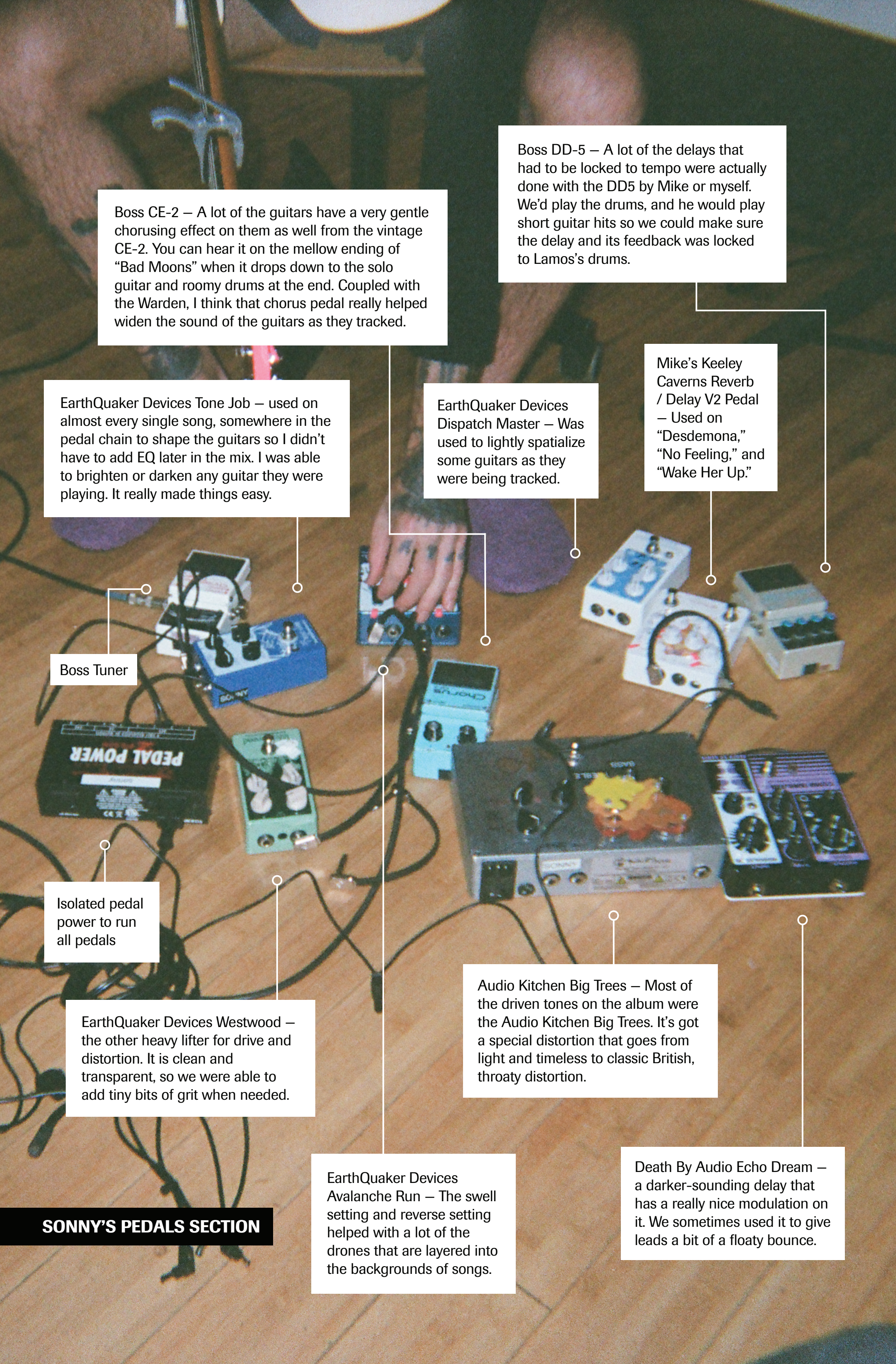
Where the magic of LP4 lies is in what we called "after dinner fun time." It became a joke that started in Omaha during the Lies sessions. The band wanted to have the ability to try a lot of new things and have what we jokingly called "after dinner fun time." It was something we looked forward to. Most of the acoustic guitars were captured after dinner during the amazing sunsets overlooking the bay. We got some great backing tracks, too: percussion, the oohs and aaaahs on “Blood on my Blood.” Even some of the guitar drones and textures - like the feedback in "Bad Moons" - were created all later in the evenings when we all felt things had slowed down a bit and we could stretch out.

Panoramic House Interior. Photo by Sonny DiPerri

“Sonny helped me track drums in a way that I didn’t think was possible: if I had to choose one record to reflect who I feel like I am as a drummer, it would be this one. I’m forever grateful to him for his support on this record–and grateful to the rest of the guys for letting me stretch out here in the ways that they did.”

- Steve Lamos

SONNY'S PEDALS SECTION



Boss DD-5 – A lot of the delays that had to be locked to tempo were actually done with the DD5 by Mike or myself. We'd play the drums, and he would play short guitar hits so we could make sure the delay and its feedback was locked to Lamos's drums.

Boss CE-2 – A lot of the guitars have a very gentle chorusing effect on them as well from the vintage CE-2. You can hear it on the mellow ending of "Bad Moons" when it drops down to the solo guitar and roomy drums at the end. Coupled with the Warden, I think that chorus pedal really helped widen the sound of the guitars as they tracked.

Mike's Keeley Caverns Reverb / Delay V2 Pedal – Used on "Desdemona," "No Feeling," and "Wake Her Up."

EarthQuaker Devices Tone Job – used on almost every single song, somewhere in the pedal chain to shape the guitars so I didn't have to add EQ later in the mix. I was able to brighten or darken any guitar they were playing. It really made things easy.

EarthQuaker Devices Dispatch Master – Was used to lightly spatialize some guitars as they were being tracked.

Boss Tuner

Isolated pedal power to run all pedals

Audio Kitchen Big Trees – Most of the driven tones on the album were the Audio Kitchen Big Trees. It's got a special distortion that goes from light and timeless to classic British, throaty distortion.

EarthQuaker Devices Westwood – the other heavy lifter for drive and distortion. It is clean and transparent, so we were able to add tiny bits of grit when needed.

Death By Audio Echo Dream – a darker-sounding delay that has a really nice modulation on it. We sometimes used it to give leads a bit of a floaty bounce.

EarthQuaker Devices Avalanche Run – The swell setting and reverse setting helped with a lot of the drones that are layered into the backgrounds of songs.

TRACK TITLES	MIKE'S GUITAR	HOLMES' GUITAR
01 MAN OVERBOARD	E A D G B E (CAPO 3)	E A D G B E (CAPO 3)
02 NO FEELING	D A E A B C#	C# A E A B C#
03 BLOOD ON MY BLOOD	X C D# G# C# C# (CAPO 1)	F A# D# G# C# F (CAPO 1)
04 BAD MOONS	D A D G A E (CAPO 12, 0)	E A D G B E
05 THE ONE WITH THE PIANO	–	–
06 PATRON SAINT OF PALE	F C F G A# C (CAPO 13, 3)	F A C F C F
07 WAKE HER UP	D# A# D# F# A# C#	D# A# D# F# A# C#
08 DESDEMONA	D A C# A C# E	D A C# A C# E (CAPO 4)
09 LULLABYE	D A C# E A E	D A C# F# A E
10 NO SOUL TO SAVE	F A C A C E (CAPO 1)	F A C A C E (CAPO 1)

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ALBUM INSPIRATION PLAYLIST

Arthur Russell	A Little Lost
Stereolab	Super Falling Star
Tom Waits	Come On Up to the House
Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds	Song of the Lake
Fenne Lily	Dawncolored Horse
Ethel Cain	Strangers
Nino Ferrer	Le Sud
Bob Dylan	Most of the Time
Tori Amos	Cloud on my Tongue
The Cure	Plain Song
Passion Pit	Little Secrets
Steve Reich	Music For 18 Musicians
R.E.M.	Orange Crush
The Smiths	Stop Me If You Think That You've Heard This One Before
Angelo Badalmente	Dance of the Dream Man
Frisell	Outlaws
Gillian Welch	The Way the Whole Thing Ends
KD Lang	Save Me
The Smashing Pumpkins	Silverfuck

Photo by Andy DeSantis

Sonny DiPerri
Producer, Mixer

Mike Kinsella
Vocals, Guitar

Steve Lamos
Drums, Trumpet

Nate Kinsella
Bass, Piano

Steve Holmes
Guitar